LA ANTORCHA

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Ecología y Resistencia

Abajo publicamos un artículo sobre la relación entre la crísis ecológica y el sistema capitalista por un preso libertario en la prisión provincial en Soria, España. El artículo apareció en ¡¡Libertad!! Medio de Expressión de la C.A.S.P.A. (Coordinadora de Ayuda y Solidaridad a los Presos Anarquistas) y de los Presos Anarquistas. Se puede obtenir copias de ¡¡Libertad!! de C.A.S.P.A.: Apdo de correos No. 55106, 28080 Madrid, España.

Por PABLO SERRANO SERRANO

CON la entrada en la era industrial y el desarrollo del capitalismo venimos asistiendo al despojo de los recursos de la tierra. Sus fuentes de energía están siendo agotadas, ya no se respetan los ciclos, la desertización, la contaminación, el peligro en que se encuentra la biosfera. . . son una realidad, que de no ponerle remedio lleva camino de acabar con el planeta y por lo tanto con la Humanidad en un período corto.

Hacia esta situación nos lleva el sistema social en que vivimos, basado en la explotación y el beneficio. En él la producción no se realiza para cubrir las necesidades de la Humanidad, sino para la obtención y acumulación de riqueza en manos de unos pocos, lo que supone fabricar bienes cada vez más costosos y socialmente inútiles (toda la variedad de armamentos, o aquellos destinados a la sociedad de consumo). Esta irracionalidad en la producción es la responsable del hambre y miseria de los pueblos del Tercer Mundo y de las bolsas de pobreza en crecimiento que tenemos en los países de capitalismo más avanzado. De aquel mito de la sociedad de la opulencia, del derroche, del "trabajo asalariado para todos," a costa de los países subdesarrollados, se ha pasado a no poder cubrir los mínimos de subsistencia del pueblo.

Ante esta realidad la lucha por la defensa de la naturaleza y de los pueblos no se puede limitar a combatir estos efectos, intentando conseguir pequeños cambios, como el que se obligue a las fábricas que contaminan a dotarse de medios que la reduzcan. Los hechos nos obligan a cuestionarnos la fabricación de estos productos y la sociedad misma. Este cambio social es imposible de conseguir a través de los mecanismos de participación que el sistema pone en marcha, pues están pensados para canalizar, integrar y desmovilizar toda lucha que cuestione su producción y su orden social.

En esta línea participativa ha caído la mayoría del movimiento ecologista, desde los grupitos de clara composición interclasista, que limitan su trabajo a la vía jurídica e institucional, pasando por otros que parten de copiar opciones integradas de otros países (caso Verdes), o las opciones personales de ecologistas "representativos" que se han sumado al carro de la mano de los partidos, hasta minigrupitos locales cuyo objetivo no es otro que el de entrar en el juego electoralista a través de plataformas de "izquierda" de su ámbito.

Todo esto ha supuesto que los logros conseguidos por el movimiento ecologista sean mínimos y han reducido a este a aspectos marginales y folklóricos, impidiendo con ello que los sectores ecologistas que iban por una línea de lucha anticapitalista se consolidaran.

Esta experiencia tiene que ser tenida en cuenta para no caer en esos errores. Para esto, hay que tener claro que la lucha por la defensa de la naturaleza y de la Humanidad ha de ir ligada a la lucha por la destrucción del tipo de sociedad que genera esta situación: el capitalismo. Esto objetivo no se logrará ni desde las vias legalistas, participativas y parlamentarias, ni desde las luchas específicas o sectoriales aisladas. Ante un enemigo común el enfrentamiento tiene que ser global, donde todas las luchas han de encuadrarse en un amplio movimiento de resistencia y de clase, que ataque al sistema desde diferentes frentes, unidos e interrelacionados (trabajadores, jornaleros, movimiento ciudadano, ecologistas, feministas, estudiantes, jóvenes, parados, colectivos antirrepresivos, pro la amnistía, culturales, grupos específicos. . .). Sólo con la lucha coordinada y mediante la utilización de todo tipo de métodos y medios para ella, podremos hacerles retroceder, frenar sus planes, arrancar victorias parciales y totales.

Ejemplos como los de Riaño y Aldeadávila de la Ribera (Salamanca) y otros, demuestran que con la movilización y resistencia de todo un pueblo se consigue frenar temporalmente las agresiones del Estado y se le obliga a mostrar su verdadero rostro represivo. Pero donde se da el caso más claro es en Lemóniz. Podemos constatar aquí, cómo la utilización de los métodos de lucha inherentes a los revolucionarios y la unidad de acción de los trabajadores de la empresa—basándose en la asamblea, el sabotaje y la no delegación—junto a la movilización popular y la lucha armada han hecho posible su total paralización. Sin embargo, el resultado más importante de esta lucha global contra el sistema será el crecimiento y consolidación que se irá produciendo en el movimiento de resistencia, lo que contribuirá a crear las condiciones objetivas para darle el "empujoncito" final al sistema.

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Nos gustaría que nuestros lectores escribieran para **La Antorcha**. Es necesario que recibamos material para la próxima edición para el viernes el 2 de septiembre de 1988, a menos que se hagan arreglos específicos. Gracias.
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which it constitutes an essential part). Within a short space, the draft statement effectively sketches this reality.

But when it comes to a discussion of racism, the statement retreats to what is in fact a "crude Marxist" analysis. (Whether it is really Marxist is a question I won't take up.) Here, racism is described as a psychological attitude that divides the workers and prevents them from uniting to wage a common fight against the capitalist/imperialist oppressors. This, of course, is true, but it doesn't tell us very much.

While the oppression of one racial, "ethnic" is probably a better term, group by another probably goes back very far in the prehistory of human beings, the type of racism we experience today is a more complicated and more recent phenomenon. I doubt that there was systematic racism at the time of, say, the Roman Empire. "Superior" was to be a Roman citizen, regardless of what "race" one belonged to or what one's skin color was. To be "inferior" was to be *not* a Roman citizen, all the way down the scale to being a slave or a "barbarian" (until the "barbarians" were strong enough to threaten the Empire, when attitudes began to change). In any case, superior or inferior wasn't a racial thing, it was political and cultural.

Modern racism began with the establishment of European global hegemony, beginning roughly around 1500. For a variety of reasons, not all of which are very clear to me, the societies of Western Europe developed the technology and the drive to conquer the rest of the world, to plunder it for their own profit and needs, and to define it according to their own values and, shall we say, prejudices. Since these countries were populated, or at least ruled, by members of the white (or Caucasian) "race," the establishment of world-wide European domination was also the establishment of global white supremacy, which was an intrinsic by-product of the establishment of the world-wide hegemony of capitalism.

Today, I firmly believe, modern racism has to be understood as fundamentally the manifestation of this global white supremacy. It is not merely the hostility of one group toward another, or a fear of the outsider or those who are different, etc. Because white societies with a technological superiority over other societies established their world-wide domination, they have been able to impose their "racial" (and other) values on the oppressed peoples of the world. Not the least of these values is the superiority of white skin pigmentation and white (European and European-derived) culture over everything else. This, in turn, has created a hierarchy of "superior"/"inferior" colors and cultures based on their relative approximation to that of the whites.

Of course, this takes different forms in different places: racism is different in South Africa, the United States, and Brazil. But modern racism is a lot more than an attitude, e.g., racial prejudice. Like the patriarchy, it is a complex *structure*, a hierarchy of power and oppression, attitudes and forms of coercion. The draft statement, failing to carry through its approach to the patriarchy to racism, does not capture this.

This is enough for now. There are other things I would like to say about the draft statement of principles, as well as some remarks on Bob McGlynn's comments, but I will leave them for another time.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Back Room Anarchist Books people for producing their draft. It is a valuable beginning of a process that must be consciously developed. We know what the great anarchist and libertarian thinkers wrote about the societies of their day. We can find out what the explicit and implicit supporters of present-day capitalism (and state capitalism) think of current society and what programs they would like to implement (i.e., impose). The crucial question we face is: what do *we*—anarchists, anti-authoritarians, libertarian socialists, living in the closing years of the 20th century—think about the world we live in today and what do we propose to do about it? Coming up with answers to this question is too important to leave to chance.□

'Questions of gender roles and sexuality lie close to the heart of the oppression of human beings.'

Protest Fire Tragedy in Ohio

By LINDA M.

ON June 9, 200 neighbors, friends and family members of seven children and adults who died in a fire demonstrated at the Hamilton, Ohio, Municipal Building demanding that city officials act on complaints about substandard housing for poor people that is dangerous.

The demonstration was provoked by the deadliest fire in Hamilton's history (Hamilton is a city north of Cincinnati), which killed five young children and two adults, one of whom was four months pregnant, in the early hours of Tuesday, June 7. The demonstrators were angry that the occupants of the house where the fire broke out could *not* escape because the windows were boarded up and the front door to the upstairs apartment was padlocked, preventing the adults and kids from reaching safety. They were also angry because of the wishy-washy and conflicting positions of the fire department and other city officials over whether there were violations of the city's fire safety code.

Deputy Fire Chief Dave Beckett said the building had been written up several times for fire code violations, for having electrical problems and no smoke detectors. He said that it is against the city's fire code to have boarded up windows in occupied residential buildings.

Later on, Fire Chief Don Lickert said the building should have had three working smoke detectors; the apartment building had dead batteries in its only smoke detector. He further said that all buildings *now* under construction are required to have electrical wiring installed in smoke detectors but existing buildings do *not* have to meet 1988 standards. The owners of the building will likely be cited for a smoke detector violation, a misdemeanor.

City officials had the following statements to make:

The padlocked door did not violate the city's fire code, although it's wrong. (The mother of four of the children who were killed in this fire had to padlock the door every night from the outside because it had no lock inside, then she went into the building through a different door.) That windows covered with boards or chicken-wire *may* have hindered the victims escape but were not a violation of the city's laws if there are *some* open windows (six of the seven children and adults killed were found beneath a boarded window). According to the city's own fire chief, the boarded windows definitely prevented them from escaping. The fire code violations from 1987 were all corrected. The co-owners of the apartment house were *not* in violation of city fire and building codes despite the boarded up windows and a padlocked front door. And, finally, the city officials said the fixed wiring in the building was not to blame.

The fire seems to have been started by a malfunctioning electrical fan. But in comments made to the Hamilton *Journal News* (Hamilton's main newspaper), the demonstrators, who included many relatives of the victims, pointed to the reasons for the deaths:

North End apartment residents who suspect fire code violations often ignore them for fear they will be evicted if they report them, according to an uncle of four of the dead children. The conditions of the building—with its windows boarded up and no lock to the front door leading to the upstairs apartment forcing tenants to use a padlock for protection—infuriated the father of one of the victims. He said no one should have to live in those conditions. The mother of one of the victims said that they had no way of getting out of that place. They (apartment complex owners) get poor people on welfare to rent their apartment, but the buildings aren't fit for anyone to live in. According to the father of another of the dead children, the apartment was run down, the walls had holes in them. One of the demonstrators who came to the Municipal Building to hear the truth about the fire, said that we want to know why the landlord was allowed to let people live like that. At a vigil for the victims, a woman said the demonstrators were there to protest that poor people are forced to live in slum houses because that's all they can afford.

Friends, relatives and neighbors of the seven who died will circulate forms required for city inspectors to enter apartments and check for fire code, building code and health department code violations. The push for a mass inspection of the neighborhood is the result of a meeting between city officials and some of the relatives of those killed in that fire.

On Friday, June 11, a second demonstration/rally was held — at the apartment building where the fire broke out, demanding that it be torn down.□

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In the June 15–July 14 issue of the Torch/La Antorcha, we reprinted a draft statement of principles and organizational structure prepared for discussion at a meeting of anarchists in Atlanta in January, 1988. (It originally appeared in MAYDAY! #3, December 1987.) It was written by people from Back Room Anarchist Books in Minneapolis. We also printed comments on the draft by Bob McGlynn. This month we continue discussion of the draft with comments by Ron Taber. For a copy of the June 15 issue with the first part of this discussion, send 50¢ to Box 1288 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

'Process Must Be Consciously Developed'

I WAS VERY pleased to see the Back Room Anarchist Books people's draft statement of principles both because I think such a statement is necessary and because I agreed with so much of it. In fact, I was surprised at how *little* I disagreed with, at least in terms of what was in the statement (as opposed to what was omitted; but more on this later).

It was particularly satisfying to see a commitment to national liberation/self-determination in the draft. Various sectors of the anarchist/anti-authoritarian milieu have not always been particularly strong on this point, often declaring that, short of a truly libertarian society, national liberation is an illusion. As a result, support for national liberation has been left to the not-so-genial hands of Marxist-Leninists and various sorts of statist nationalists. One result of this situation is that support for national liberation and support for authoritarian "socialist" regimes appear to many to be the same thing.

Of course, *full* national liberation can only be secured by a world-wide democratic and cooperative society, that is, through an international social revolution. But that is true of *all* other rights that anarchists, anti-authoritarians and libertarian socialists endorse and fight for. As with these other rights, anarchists should endorse the right to national self-determination, as well as specific national liberation struggles, while making clear that gains that may be won short of a libertarian socialist society will be limited and tenuous. We should also indicate our political opposition to the authoritarian leaderships of most of these struggles.

To fail to support national liberation struggles is to be authoritarian ourselves because this winds up denying rights to others on the grounds that we deem them illusory short of total victory. It is also to cede an important issue to Marxist-Leninists and nationalists.

Although there are other points in the draft statement of unity that I would like to praise, space limitations lead me to turn to some criticisms.

To use Bob McGlynn's phrase, there are a number of "gaping holes" in the statement. The first, which Bob discussed, is the lack of any mention of the so-called "socialist" countries. I think it is crucial to put our opposition to the regimes in these countries, and to the social system they represent, in a prominent part of any statement of unity. To me, to be an anarchist or libertarian socialist and to support any of the Stalinist states is a total contradiction. These are authoritarian societies almost totally dominated by the state, and ruled by single parties, which attempt to crush any meaningful opposition. Many millions of people are currently oppressed by these systems and many millions were murdered in the brutal efforts—forced collectivization in Russia, the Great Leap Forward in China—to build them. How can one be an anti-authoritarian and support such regimes? Certainly, we have to draw firm lines somewhere and if we don't draw one here, where do we?

The issue is not just an analysis of the current state of the world and what "positions" we take on various political questions. Equally, if not more, important is the question of what our vision of a truly free — democratic, cooperative and egalitarian—society is. Support for the Stalinist system, no matter how tepid or qualified, implies a vision of society tainted with statism and authoritarianism. To be as clear as we can about what kind of society we are *for*, we have to make it absolutely clear that "Communism," "socialism," etc. (I believe these societies are forms of state capitalism) have nothing in common with our vision and that we are opposed to them. (One can and must defend, say, Nicaragua from U.S. imperialism without contending that the Sandinista regime there is in any way anti-authoritarian or libertarian socialist.)

Another "gaping hole" in the draft statement of principles is the lack of any mention of support for Lesbian and Gay Liberation. Although this is implicitly included in the statement's stated opposition to the patriarchy, it really ought to be made explicit. After all, lesbians and gay men are among the most misunderstood, hated, feared, and oppressed of all of society's specially oppressed people. Particularly during the current period of AIDS panic, it is crucial that we affirm our commitment to lesbian and gay rights and to the full liberation of lesbians and gay men.

It is also essential to link this commitment to full support for sexual liberation, that is, the right of all people to express their own sexuality (within the limits of consensuality) without regard to whether such sexuality does or doesn't fit within society's restrictive and oppressive notions of what constitutes "natural" or "moral" gender roles.

Although Marxism stresses the centrality of material production, in some ways questions of gender roles and sexuality lie much closer to the heart of the oppression of human beings within human society, including, of course, its current form, capitalism. The idea that who you are, what position in society you should have, what kind of social role you should play, how you should dress and how you should make love—that all this should depend on what kind of genitals you were born with, is truly outrageous. And yet it is something taken virtually totally for granted by the overwhelming majority of human beings currently on the planet and throughout history.

The oppressive role of gender as a determinant of social role is as powerful as it is in part because it is accepted by so many people who are oppressed by it. And it is accepted because it appears to be "natural"; although human beings have been making love for pleasure, as well as for procreation, ever since, I think it is fair to say, the emergence of the human species.

To strike at the straitjacket of social/sexual roles, to declare ourselves to be opposed to all sexual oppression and to openly affirm sexual liberation is therefore in some way the most revolutionary stance we can take. And it will certainly differentiate the anarchist/libertarian/anti-authoritarian milieu from those liberals and leftists who remain trapped within authoritarian ideological structures.

Another weakness of the statement is its superficiality of its discussion of the question of racism. This is in contrast to the discussion of the patriarchy. The patriarchy, which entails the oppression of women and of all those who do not conform to traditional sexual/social roles, is correctly portrayed in the draft statement as a *structure*, as a hierarchy of power and oppression. Thus, the oppression of women is not just the result of an attitude of males (that is, male chauvinism), but one aspect of a much more complicated economic/social/cultural/political/ideological/psychological matrix, of which male chauvinism is an essential element. This matrix has its own existence and development (although it is conditioned by the circumstances in which it is embedded and of

Racism is more than an attitude; it's a structure that permeates society.

Who Gains?

(Continued from page 1)
sion, but had not been able to get through to Jackson in Cincinnati.

Yet, it seems unlikely that the Dukakis campaign machinery, which has earned a reputation for being "meticulous," made some kind of booboo. More likely, Dukakis, who has definitely clinched the nomination, was getting pissed off that Jackson was continuing to get more attention from the news media than he was, as well as with Jackson's insistence that because of how well he had done in the primaries, he should be treated as a fellow leader of the Democratic Party.

Whether Dukakis consciously decided not to inform Jackson directly or whether he merely chose to treat Jackson "no differently" than the other runner-ups in the campaign (and then failed to reach him on time), the result was to make it obvious that Jackson was not the major player in the top circles of the Democratic Party that he claims and wants to be. In other words, Dukakis' move made it clear that he takes Jackson and his supporters for granted.

Bentsen: Bush clone?

That this is indeed the case was confirmed by Dukakis' choice for the vice-presidential slot. Lloyd Bentsen is about as conservative and pro-business a Democrat as you can get. Bentsen comes from one of the richest and most powerful families in the state. His father, Lloyd Sr., owns, or used to own, a significant portion of the Rio Grande valley (much of the profits from his agricultural, oil and banking businesses undoubtedly originated in the very high rates of profit generated from the merciless exploitation of undocumented Mexican workers).

Rep. William Gray (Pa.), key Jackson backer, praised Bentsen as a 'good choice.'

Lloyd, the son, wholeheartedly supported the cornerstone of Ronald Reagan's economic program: tax cuts for (rich) individuals and tax incentives for business. During 1981, the first year of the Reagan administration, no Democratic Senator was more supportive of the Reagan program than he, according to the *Congressional Quarterly.*

Bentsen supports mandatory prayer in the public schools, production of the MX missile, restrictions on mandatory busing to end school segregation, and has voted for aid to the contras in Nicaragua. As the *New York Times* put it, "Some of Mr. Bentsen's political views are more like the Vice President's than the Massachusetts Governor's."

In choosing Bentsen, Dukakis is explicitly courting conservative (and racist) Democrats who voted for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984. His assumption is that liberal Democrats, Black as well as white, will vote for him, regardless of who he picks for the vice presidential candidate and no matter what platform he runs on, because they will do anything to defeat "Reaganism," i.e., George Bush.

Dukakis is absolutely right about this, and Jackson knows it. For all of his claims to have wanted to be the vice presidential nominee, he probably would agree that a candidate like Bentsen (perhaps a bit more moderate, like Ohio Senator John Glenn), was the correct "political" choice.

Snub reveals the truth

What irks Jackson is that Dukakis made so little effort to hide the reality—that the Democratic liberals can be taken for granted because, whatever they say, they have no intention of splitting the Democratic Party.

Jackson is undoubtedly miffed for other reasons. For one, the way Dukakis made his move makes it that much harder for Jackson to convince his followers to campaign for Dukakis and turn out for him in November. Jackson is going to do it anyway, but he would certainly like Dukakis to make this easier for him rather than harder.

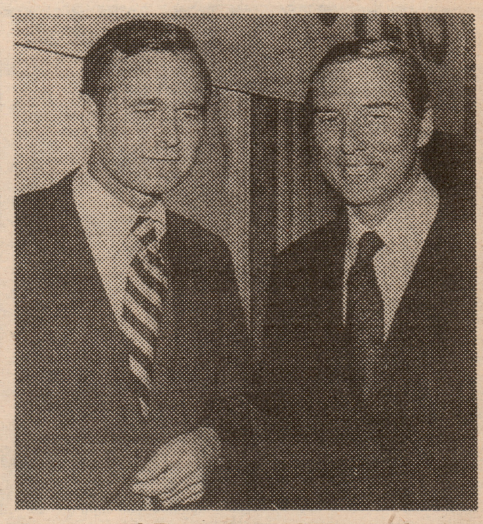
Another reason for Jackson to be annoyed is that he was insulted in public. Not just because he wasn't seriously considered for the vice presidential nomination. Not just because he wasn't consulted about Dukakis' choice. Not just because Dukakis didn't have the decency or tact to inform him before the news media found out. Jackson was insulted because Dukakis has made the reality of Jesse Jackson's power and status in the Democratic Party very clear.

In the opinion of the National Democratic leaders, Jackson is primarily an ornament. He is useful to convince Blacks, other oppressed people and white liberals that the Democratic Party really stands for their interestss, that it is their party and that they should vote for the Democrats on Election Day, this year and every other year.

Jackson knows what the Democrat big shots think of his role, but believes he can increase his power inside the party by trading on his base, his ability to deliver the Black vote, the liberal vote, etc. But his bargaining power is limited since he has made it clear from the beginning that he is committed to the Democratic Party heart and soul and has no thought of leaving it; the Rainbow Coalition (remember that?) was never meant to be anything but a vehicle for the Jesse Jackson candidacy *inside the Democratic Party.* Those who thought otherwise were deluding themselves.

Jackson in a box

Jesse Jackson is now in a box (which is exactly where the leaders of the Democratic Party want him to be). He really has no choice but to support Dukakis and Bentsen in November. And he really has to avoid turning the Democratic National Convention upside down through a political brawl. An angry and tumultuous convention would severly hurt the Democrats' chances in the fall and Jackson cannot afford to appear to be the one responsible for this.



Bush and Bentsen, 1970, as rivals for Senate — which is to the right?

As a result, Jackson can only threaten to disrupt the convention in order to extract a few, virtually meaningless concessions from Dukakis. Perhaps there'll be a few sparks in the debates on the convention floor, but when it is all over, Jackson will embrace the Dukakis/Bentsen ticket and will play pied piper in the fall.

In his treatment of Jackson, and in his selection of Lloyd Bentsen as his running-mate, Dukakis has revealed the truth. The Democrats take the votes of Black people for granted. The real deals are not made toward the left, but toward the center and the right, toward the conservative (and racist and sexist) businessmen who do business and play golf with the likes of Lloyd Bentsen (and George Bush).

And, if Dukakis takes the votes of Blacks, other oppressed people and white liberals for granted during an election campaign, why is he going to do anything different if he is elected? □

The Dukakises and the Jacksons.

Homophobia, Racism and the Image of Harold Washington

(Continued from page 2)
ary and radical. Do we defend the Black youths for taking direct action or do we criticize them for lack of African pride? ("There is nothing inherently racist about the idea of U.S. Blacks going back to Africa.")

So this painting thing is more complicated than Darrell and Guy would have it. It was an attempt by a white smart aleck (and perhaps racist) to use the homophobia of society (including the Black community) to insult the dignity, as society perceives it, of a Black leader. This in a society that has denied Black people the right to any dignity that the larger society needs to recognize, that has considered the most distinguished Black men "boys" and most accomplished Black women "girls." The image of Harold Washington is being slapped, not with a reminder of his shabby record as far as defending and organizing the Black community (or all working and poor people) is concerned, but with quick shouts of "fatty" and "faggot." Our response needs to be to assert both Black pride and Gay pride, criticize the cult of slimness and youth and condemn the intent of the artist. Of course we defend drag and gender blurring life paths and fashion statements. But there is nothing daring or challenging to society about a young white artist picturing an older Black community leader as what society considers a buffoon. He is simply doing what he has been taught to do since day one.

The question of the involvement of police and politicians is more straightforward. These people are the front line in enforcing the enslavement of the Black people of Chicago. They can't be trusted to defend against racist attacks, and they will use this painting incident in the future to justify attacks on the free speech of people organizing struggles. In South Africa, for instance, Black people are regularly charged with stirring up race hatred for speaking the truth about apartheid. By using the police, the State, the aldermen weakened, not strengthened, the Black community's ability to fight back against racism. And as Darrell and Guy point out, a number of the Black aldermen are trying to use a spirited defense of the dead man's image to cover up their recent alliance with the racist clique that bitterly opposed Washington when he was alive. There is no reason to support in any way the state policing what is and what is not acceptable. We should all oppose the seizure of the painting by the Chicago cops. But that should not be allowed to obscure the issue for us. We would want a "Black and Gay, Strong and Proud" picket line at the Art Institute condemning the painting, the posturing of the aldermen, and the police action.

William Falk
New York

Soviet Union...

(Continued from previous page)

ical monopoly of the Communist Party, that is, to allow other parties to exist, and to advocate and organize for alternative political and economic programs. Without this, none of the other proposals mean very much.

A proposal to limit officeholders to two or three 5-year terms is of little import if such officeholder can only be replaced by members of the same party. Elections involving more than one candidate, as proposed by Gorbachev, will be little more than personality contests when all candidates are from one party that does not even allow independent factions standing on distinct platforms to exist.

Allowing "civic organizations," including non-Communist groups, to exist doesn't add up to a great deal in the way of democracy, when the Communist Party has the right to determine which group is a *bona fide* "civic organization" and which is an illegal political party.

Granting more autonomy to local and national soviets is not much more than student government when it is the Communist Party that sets basic policy. The soviets will have little to do but discuss how the already agreed-upon policy is to be carried out.

And of course, full freedom of speech and the press, full freedom to travel and emigrate, and other basic political rights are not even mentioned.

Despite all the hoopla in the Soviet Union itself and in the U.S. media, I remain highly skeptical about the success of Gorbachev's program. Perhaps I am wrong and am missing out on what will turn out to be the "Fourth Russian Revolution" (or some such term that appeared in the impressionable U.S. news media). But aside from the timidity of Gorbachev's proposals, one of the things that was so striking about the recent party conference and previous national party gatherings, was the fact that when he was faced with a more or less open conflict between more radical proponents of perestroika and conservative foot-draggers, Gorbachev intervened against the former and in favor of the latter.

Thus, at the conference, Gorbachev reserved some of his harshest language for his own economics adviser, Leonid I. Abalkin, for criticizing his proposals as inadequate and daring to hint at the elimination of the one-party system. Abalkin's comments, said Gorbachev "reeked of economic determinism" and reflected a lack of faith in the Communist system.

And then there is the hapless Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin is the former head of the Moscow Party organization and a former member of the Politburo who was removed from both posts and forced to read a public apology because he was overly blunt in his criticisms of various party leaders, especially Central Committee Secretary Yegor Ligachev, for obstructing perestroika. Yeltsin was humiliated once again when he asked for "political rehabilitation" at the closing session of the recent conference. Amid sneers and other forms of mockery, his request has denied.

Gorbachev, in his closing speech, said Yeltsin was "impatient" and needed to be "more polite." In a party which imprisons dissidents in prisons, labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals, places people under house arrest and fires them from their jobs for applying to emigrate, etc., etc., Gorbachev's concern for maintaining proper decorum is rather touching. It is actually a threat directed at all those not satisfied with the tortoise-like pace of reform that they will be dealt with severely.

On the other hand, Gorbachev went out of his way to demonstrate his good relations and solidarity with Ligachev, undoubtedly one of the de facto opponents of perestroika.

In fact, glasnost/perestroika is just the latest in a long line of attempts to reform a stagnant, statist and authoritarian society from the top. Khrushchev tried it and got the boot for his efforts. Count Witte tried it under the feeble minded Tsar Nicholas II, but he, too failed. The liberal Alexander II made a stab at it, only to draw back from the destabilizing consequences.

The only time state-induced efforts to modernize Russia/the Soviet Union have worked is when modernizing programs were carried out by bloodthirsty tyrants (and maniacs) — Ivan IV ("the Terrible"), Peter the Great and J.V. Stalin — who were willing to break an uncountable number of heads.

So what's going to happen in Russia? At the risk of getting caught out on a limb, here's my guess. In the short-to-medium run, Gorbachev will try to implement his relatively mild program over the foot-dragging and outright sabotage of various sections of the bureaucracy. At some point, when the economy still shows no sign of significant improvement and/or when the workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities start to take matters in their own hands, the party elite will probably move against Gorbachev and kick him out too.

Well, and what then?

The history of Russia throughout the ages is dominated by a number of recurring themes. One of these is a tendency for the system to lapse into slothful stagnation. Another is the general failure of efforts to reform the system from above. A third is that the country seems to explode in mass rebellions every hundred years or so.... □

Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism

By Christopher Z. Hobson and Ronald D. Tabor

551 + xvii pages. Fully indexed. To be published by Greenwood Press, September.

Is socialism a doctrine of liberation for oppressed people, or of state centralization leading to new oppression? Historically, the authors contend, it has been both.

Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism is partly a detailed examination of the Bolshevik revolution, its degeneration, and the nature of the USSR today. Analysing Russia as a state capitalist society, the authors argue that Trotsky's view of it as a (degenerated) workers' state fatally compromised both his vision of socialism and the program and practice of the movement he founded.

Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism is also the first full-length study in English of the Trotskyist movement over six decades and five continents. Written over the past ten years, it was born out of the RSL's reevaluation of Trotskyism and its move toward a more consistently antiauthoritarian world view.

Containing a lengthy discussion of the Russian economy, this work is essential reading for antiauthorian activists and all students of the Soviet Union and socialism.

Armenian Struggle Continues

By CHRIS HUDSON

YEREVAN, Soviet Armenia, February —In the midst of continous street rallies by crowds of up to 750,000, two representatives of protesting Armenians fly to Moscow to meet with Mikhail Gorbachev. After being slathered with promises and compliments by Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, they return to Yerevan to urge that the protests be suspended to allow Gorbachev time to act on their demands.

Yerevan, July 14 — A third major wave of protests has begun. After five months, the protesters' hopes in Gorbachev have achieved exactly nothing, and it's not clear that they ever will.

The Armenians are demanding that the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh be transferred from the neighboring republic of Azerbaijan to Armenia. Nagorno-Karabakh is chunk of territory within Azerbaijan, only 10 miles from Armenia at the closest point; 126,000 of its 160,000 people are Armenians. Armenians have campaigned for joining the territory to Armenia for over two years. The demands has been steadily opposed by Azerbaijan, which has veto power under a constitutional provision originally meant to protect minority nationalities.

Following the leaders' meeting with Gorbachev, the Armenian protests were suspended for a month. At the end of that time, the Communist Party leadership in Moscow announced their decision: Nagorno-Karabakh would remain under Azerbaijani control. An effort to resume demonstrations fizzled in the face of threats of mass arrests. But in May, an Azerbaijani court handed down sentences of only 3–15 years against Azerbaijanis convicted of murder after an anti-Armenian rampage back in February in which at least 32 Armenians were killed. The sentences sparked a series of general strikes in Yerevan. This second wave of protests was defused when a newly appointed Armenian CP chief (an ethnic Armenian, unlike his predecessor!) promised to support annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh, and when protest leaders decided not to "embarrass" Gorbachev on the eve of the Moscow Party Conference. But at the Party Conference, without mentioning Armenia directly, Gorbachev attacked demands for boundary revisions as "abuses of democratization."

Yerevan in February.

So protests flared again. On July 5, in a new general strike, Yerevan's Zvartnots Airport was shut down for a day. Cops waded in, beating dozens, wounding 36 protesters, and killing a 22-year-old man. His funeral July 7 was attended by "hundreds of thousands" of mourners, according to an on-the-spot report. A few days later the Nagorno-Karabakh legislature voted to secede from Azerbaijan, a move Azerbaijan promptly declared "null and void." As we go to press, another general strike has begun, accompanied by street rallies of up to 200,000 people.

Armenians and Azerbaijanis are both oppressed populations within the USSR, but they are playing very different roles. The Armenians are raising a simple demand for the right of self-determination. But this demand opens up the whole question of Moscow's oppression of dozens of nationalities from the Baltic to the Pacific. The Azerbaijanis have historic/cultural ties to Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Azerbaijani minority there has its own rights. But these questions could easily be settled by negotiation if the principle of self-determination were recognized. The Azerbaijani leaders — unfortunately, with what seems to be the support of the population — are actually doing Gorbachev's work for him, holding down the Armenians, preventing a surge of nationalist demands elsewhere, and letting Gorbachev pose as the "neutral" trying to defuse a "difficult situation."

As of now, the Armenian protests seem to be escalating again. If, as seems likely, Gorbachev soon has to show his hand openly, it will become clear whether the Armenian protesters' hopes in him were justified. □

assessed. (Party leaders Grigorii Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Nikolai Bukharin, purged and executed by Stalin, have been rehabilitated in varying degrees, for example.)

'Perestroika' means austerity

While some observers would like to believe that Gorbachev is seriously committed to democracy, they are likely to be disappointed. Glasnost is meant primarily to be a political weapon, that is, a means to mobilize support (primarily among the intellectuals) for the second and more important part of Gorbachev's strategy, perestroika.

While there has been a lot of talk about perestroika, and a lot of measures have been proposed, it is not clear exactly what has been implemented. The general idea, however, has been to loosen state control over the day-to-day management of the economy, decrease the role of the central planning agencies and allow market forces greater sway, and to give factory managers, peasants and other Soviet citizens a degree of autonomy in an attempt to get them to work harder and more efficiently. For example, factory managers have been given more leeway to determine what lines of goods, and in what quantities and with what methods, their factories will produce. They are also being allowed to contract directly with the suppliers of the raw materials, to keep a greater amount of the profits generated in their enterprises and to determine how those profits are to be utilized. At least officially, they are also being allowed to lay off workers, something not generally done in the Soviet Union, in the interests of increasing industrial efficiency.

Other measures proposed as part of perestroika include granting citizens the right to set up their own businesses (as long as they don't hire anyone else) and to form cooperatives. Peasants are to be encouraged to form work brigades and to make separate contracts with the collective farms and the state.

We do not, as I mentioned, know which of these proposals have actually been implemented. But, whatever the case, perestroika has not had much of an impact up to now.

According to the resolution on perestroika approved by the Party conference:

> The economic structure remains, on the whole, cost-intensive [wasteful —RT]. Scientific and technological progress is yet slow, and the plans for increasing the national income and resource-saving are not fulfilled. There is no noticeable improvement in product quality. The country's finances are still in a bad state. Tensions remain in the supply of foodstuffs and consumer goods, and the population's demand for services is not fully met. The housing problem remains acute.

There are a number of reasons why perestroika has been a failure so far. In the first place, the measures proposed, even if they were fully implemented, are not really very radical. Peasants are not allowed to leave the notoriously inefficient collective farms. Cooperative ventures are taxed extremely heavily. People going into business for themselves must do so after their regular working hours and are not allowed to hire anyone else. Many of the measures proposed for the factories have long been the *de facto* but illegal practice; Gorbachev is mostly proposing to make them legal so they can be more closely regulated.

Another reason for the poor results of perestroika is the fact that the workers do not wholeheartedly support it. This isn't surprising since the party openly admits that perestroika will mean laying off workers, speeding up the production lines, increasing wage differentials, and, at some point in the future, vastly increasing the price of food, as Gorbachev has promised to lift state subsidies of food prices. Meanwhile, the workers do not see the party elite, which lives luxuriously compared to the average worker, being asked to make comparable sacrifices.

In many ways, perestroika is like an austerity program typical of the traditional capitalist countries. The workers are being asked to make real sacrifices today in return for the promise of an improvement in their living standards tomorrow... or the day after tomorrow... or....

Probably most important right now, Gorbachev and perestroika face considerable opposition from within the party and state bureaucracy. Some of this opposition is for purely selfish reasons. After all, if perestroika is actually implemented, thousands of bureaucrats, technicians and clerks in the central economic ministries will lose their jobs, while many others will see their power greatly diminished.

A signifiicant part of the opposition, however, is motivated by ideological considerations. Undoubtedly, sections of the party believe that perestroika is roughly the equivalent of putting the capitalist foot in the door. Once the door is opened, it can't be closed, and the Soviet Union will be overwhelmed by capitalist "laws of motion," thus undoing 70 years of "socialist construction."

Fear of openings created

Probably more legitimately, some people in the party are afraid of the political implications of perestroika. They correctly fear that the workers, peasants and the oppressed nationalities will take advantage of the openings created by perestroika and glasnost to go beyond the tepid proposals of Gorbachev, in other words, to wage a real struggle for their freedom and economic well-being.

Hints of the possibilities entailed can be seen in the Baltic Republics (annexed by force in 1940), where the long-restless Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians have been agitating for meaningful autonomy. They can be seen even more brilliantly in the Caucasus, where the Armenians' demand that the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic become part of the Armenian SSR has already led to mass demonstrations, sit-ins, riots and general strikes. (See separate article.)

It was largely to overcome opposition to perestroika within the party that Gorbachev called the extraordinary party conference. And it is because the future of perestroika is by no means secure that Gorbachev has proposed (and won approval for) a variety of political measures that are designed to loosen party control over the day-to-day administration of the Soviet economy and political system.

While some of the proposals appear to be quite radical, they are, like the other aspects of perestroika, rather tepid. Some are even self-contradictory. Thus a proposal to increase the role of the local soviets in day-to-day affairs is offset by a proposal that local party chairpersons are to be nominated to head the soviets.

The proposal to increase the powers of the president (actually, the chairperson of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, now a purely ceremonial position), is mitigated by the fact that this president would be elected by the Supreme Soviet (as is the case today) rather than by direct vote, and by what appears to be Gorbachev's intent to assume the presidency himself. In short, all the measures designed to decrease the power of the ruling Communist Party are offset by other measures designed to secure that very power.

Most important, Gorbachev has absolutely no intention of ending the polit-

(Continued on next page)

Union: Can Gorbachev Succeed?

What the Soviet Union Produces and What Socialist Economy is Like

How Planning is Carried Out

A marked characteristic of the Soviet economy is its planned nature. Since private capital has been abolished altogether and all the means of production are vested in the people, the sole master of the country, it has become possible to plan all economic development. State economic planning was first introduced on Lenin's initiative.

Plans are drafted for five years (hence the "Five-Year Plan"), but also for a year, for three-month and one-month periods. Long-term plans are also drafted for ten years and longer. This system makes it possible to determine with ultimate precision all possibilities and needs, to know in advance how much steel will be smelted and cotton produced, how many motor cars, planes, ships and machine tools will be made, and even how many specialists in one field or another must be trained.

How is planning carried out?

First, on the basis of detailed scientific analysis taking into account the economic laws a draft of the main lines of the five-year plan is prepared. This draft is then submitted for a nationwide discussion. It is broadly discussed for some months by the working people who make concrete recommendations regarding it.

Then the draft is submitted for consideration to the supreme organ of the Party, i.e., its Congress. After the Party has considered and adopted the draft at its Congress, the countrywide plan is worked out on its basis by experts. The plan is then endorsed by a session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, after which it becomes a law, to be strictly followed and fulfilled.

The labour successes scored by Soviet people show how inexhaustible are the initiative and enthusiasm of the masses working for themselves. After all, the country's economic growth is not an end in itself nor is it aimed at satisfying a private striving for superprofit. The main objective is to raise the material well-being of the people.

Fantasy life of the Soviet ruling class.

Soviet

By RON TABER

FROM June 28 to July 2, an unusual meeting of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) took place in Moscow. Designed to address the ongoing crisis of Soviet society, the gathering was quite different from the standard All-Soviet congresses of the Communist Party.

For one thing, the meeting was an extraordinary party *Conference*, which are held only occasionally, rather than a Congress, which are held at regular intervals. It was the first party conference since 1941. For another, parts of the conference (Party leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev's opening and closing speeches) were televised so that the Soviet public could view them, in contrast to the super-closed meetings that have been typical.

Also out of the ordinary was the fact that the gathering involved some real discussion and even debate, rather than the boring, ritual affirmations of the wisdom and correctness of party leaders and policies. (One delegate even called for the resignation of four party old-timers, including Andrei Gromyko, current Soviet President and long-time party functionary.)

Not least, the conference openly admitted some of the various problems facing the country and voted for apparently radical (in the Soviet context) measures designed to deal with them.

On the surface, the party conference was a victory for Gorbachev. Although there was some opposition to his program and some criticism of his leadership, overall he seems to have further consolidated his position in the party hierarchy while winning approval of his ideas for rescuing Soviet society from the quagmire in which it has been bogged down.

Despite all this, the conference was less of a victory for Gorbachev than it appears and the future course of Soviet society is by no means settled.

Long term stagnation underlying problem

The immediate background to the conference is the continued stagnation of the Soviet economy and various problems resulting from this. The Soviet Union has experienced very little, if any, economic growth over the past few years, despite the measures taken by Gorbachev since he came to power in March, 1985. There has been, in effect, a continuation of the long-term stagnation of the Soviet economy that began in the mid to late 1970s, under then party leader Leonid Brezhnev.

According to Leonid I. Abalkin, director of the Economics Institute and a close adviser to Gorbachev, "In the last two years national income growth rates were lower than those of the stagnation years [a reference to the period under Brezhnev, see below—RT]. The targets for such an important index of efficiency as resource savings were not met. Over the last two years, this index fell by an average of 0.1 percent."

In addition to low rates of overall growth and productivity, the Soviet economy has been plagued by problems of poor quality of goods and an inefficient system of supply and distribution that causes a great deal of waste. Both result in drastic shortages of major goods, especially consumer necessities, such as food and housing. And for the average citizen, luxuries are out of the question: the waiting list to buy a car is roughly ten years.

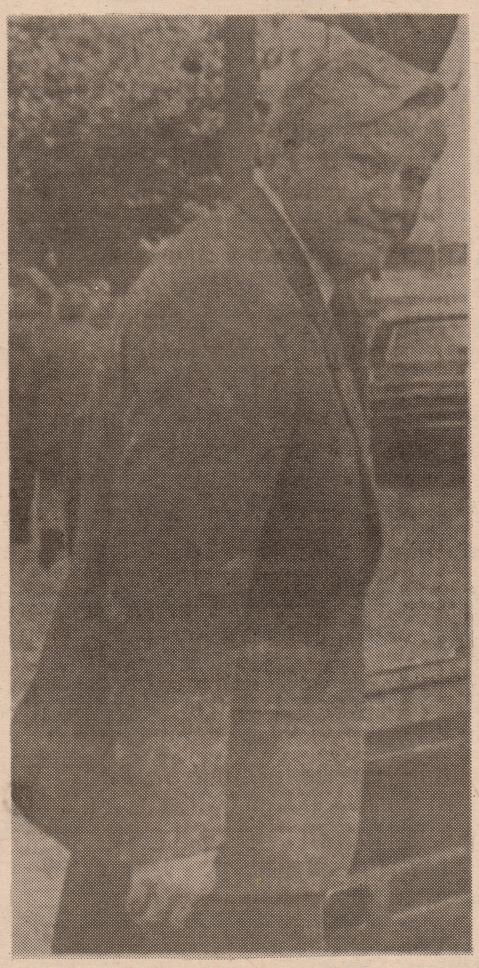
Perhaps the most significant failure of the Soviet economy, at least in the minds of the ruling class, is on the technological front. "Of particular concern," said Abalkin, "is the situation with scientific and technical progress, where the gap from world levels is increasing and assuming ominous proportions." In other words, the Soviet Union is falling ever further behind the advanced capitalist countries in the development and implementation of advanced technology.

The human costs of Soviet failure

These economic problems have had a direct impact on the physical well-being of Soviet workers and peasants. Despite the much-touted Soviet system of health care, various indices of the health of Soviet citizens have been declining. Referring to past tendencies to ignore concrete realities, Minister of Health Yevgeny I. Chazov commented as follows: "We were proud of our health-care system, but we kept silent about the fact that we ranked 50th in the world behind Mauritius and Barbados in infant mortality. We were proud that we had more hospitals than any other country in the world, but we kept silent about the fact that we ranked 32nd in the world in life expectancy.... Each year poor water supplies, substandard sanitation and the improper processing of meat and dairy products are responsible for 2.7 million cases of acute intestinal infections in the Soviet Union."

Given the shortages of both basic goods and luxuries, and the banalities of an ideologically controlled cultural life, the Soviet workers, even though poorly paid, have little to spend their money on. One result of this is alcoholism that has reached epidemic proportions.

As the comments cited above suggest, these and other problems, while long familiar to informed observers of the Soviet scene, are now fairly openly admitted and are the subject of both official and unofficial discussion in Russia. However, the dominant trend, officially encouraged, is to ascribe them to the "years of stagnation." The intent, of course, is to place the blame for these problems on the policies and personalities of Brezhnev and his cronies, rather than on the nature of the economic and social system in Russia.



'Hapless' Boris Yeltsin.

It is conveniently forgotten that Cde. Brezhnev was, at first and for most of his reign, warmly welcomed by the overwhelming majority of party bureaucrats, as well as much of the population as a whole, who were tired of the disruptions caused by Brezhnev's predecessor, Nikita S. Khrushchev. (It is also conveniently forgotten that these disruptions were the result of Cde. Khrushchev's efforts to deal with many of the very same problems that plague Soviet society today.)

Coercion can't develop modern economy

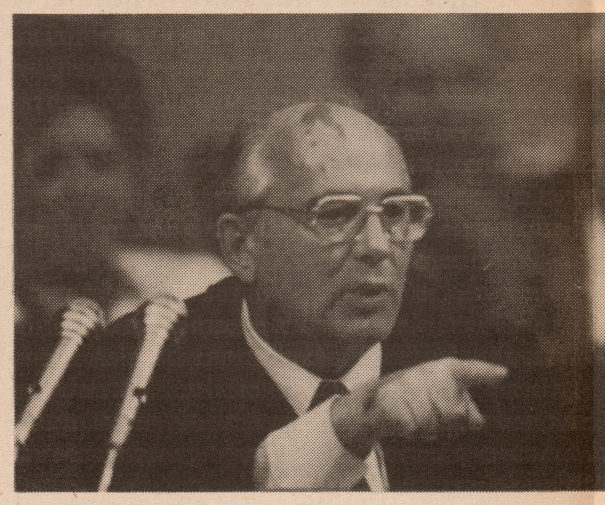
In fact, the current failings of Soviet society are not at all new, and are not at all the result of some ill-advised policies of Leonid Brezhnev. They reflect a larger dynamic within the Soviet economy and social system (as well as similar systems in other countries, such as China, Cuba, Vietnam, etc.). This is a tendency to be successful only in those tasks that can be roughly summarized under the term "primitive accumulation," that is, the construction of a basic industrial infrastructure, the accumulation of a certain amount of national capital and the creation of a modern working class. While begun in Russia under the last of the Tsars, these tasks were largely completed under Stalin, by means of forced collectivization and forced industrialization, which resulted in the deaths of some tens of millions of people. (Including the purges, moderate estimates of the number of those who died range from 20 to 35 million!) During this period (roughly from 1930–50, including the reconstruction after World War II), the Soviet economy achieved relatively high rates of growth. But once these steps had been accomplished, the economy has tended to stagnate.

It is easy to see why. State ownership and the central allocation of resources, coupled with a mass mobilization of labor through propaganda, piece-work style incentives, and the most brutal forms of coercion (and entailing extremely low rates of pay and terrible working conditions), can build roads, canals, and even rudimentary steel factories. But they can't develop sophisticated technology, run high precision industry and turn out high quality goods. While the worst features of the system have been eliminated, state "planning" is grossly inefficient, and it gives neither managers nor workers enough incentives or freedom to make the system productive.

A two-pronged approach

This, in a nutshell, has been the underlying problem with the Soviet economy from the early 1950s until today. And after the deaths of Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev was selected as leader of the CPSU with the explicit mandate to deal with it.

During his first two years in office, Gorbachev, in addition to consolidating his power, sought to revitalize the Soviet economy through a combination of exhortation (calling on the Soviet people to work harder and sacrifice for the benefit of the country) and coercion (attacking the excessive privileges and corruption of the Soviet elite and cracking down on the consumption of alcohol). When this (surprise, surprise!) didn't work, Gorbachev sought a more audacious approach. This approach has been two-pronged. One prong is *glasnost* (meaning "openness"). The other is *perestroika* ("restructuring").



Glasnost has entailed a more or less open admission and discussion of the problems of the country and a definite but limited, increase in freedom of political and cultural expression. Some (but by no means all) dissidents in prison, labor camps, psychiatric hospitals, and under house arrest, etc., have been released (although usually without any admission that they are innocent of wrongdoing). Reformers and liberals have been elected to head various cultural organizations. Some cultural works banned during the '60s and '70s (such as Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, Anatoli Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, and the movie *Commissar*, now playing in New York) have been published or released. Some independent political organizations and activities, including meetings, newsletters and demonstrations have been allowed or at least tolerated. (The most radical individuals, groups and actions, however, continue to be harassed and suppressed.) And some of the country's history is being re-

Freedom and Peace in Poland

Direct Report on May Strikes

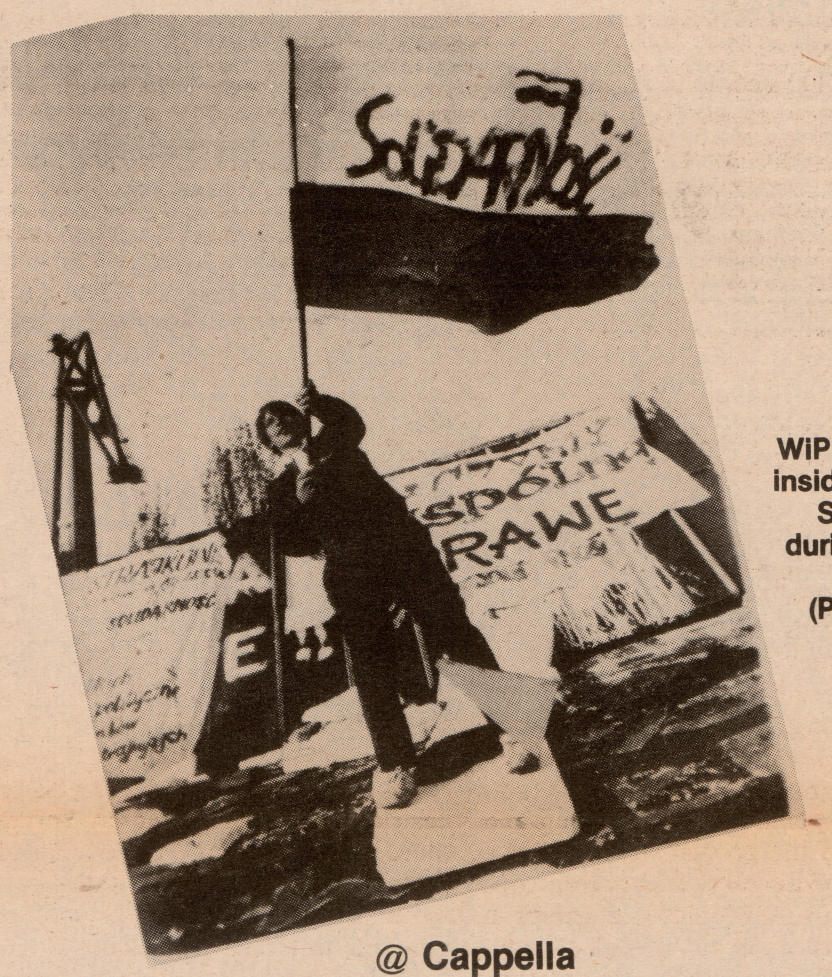
IN early May, thousands of Polish workers went on strike against austerity measures initiated by the government. The longest and most determined strike was in Gdańsk's Lenin Shipyards, where Solidarność was born. But the May strikes were largely led and carried out by a new generation of activists, people who were teenagers or younger during the 1980–81 Solidarność insurgency. (See the May 15–June 14 *Torch/La Antorcha* for specifics about the strikes.)

This same generation has also been the moving force behind Freedom and Peace (WiP), an organization we have frequently reported on in the past. To the right is a leaflet put out by the Gdańsk area chapters of Freedom and Peace during the strike wave. The leaflet was a one page special edition of *@ Cappella*, a zine put out by the Gdańsk Freedom and Peace chapter. As the name of their publication implies, the Gdańsk WiP chapter includes a number of anarchists, some of whom are also active in the RSA, the organization that wrote the letter that appeared in the June 15–July 14 issue of the *Torch/La Antorcha*.

Jan Minkiewicz, WiP's official representative in the West, has written a short introduction to the leaflet. On the far right is a description of the Gdańsk WiP chapter's activities during the strike by one of its members, Krzystof Galinski.

From the beginning on, Freedom and Peace has shown not only moral, but also logistic and organizational support for the strikers. On Mayday, on May 3rd, at the universities and in the striking factories, WiP (Freedom and Peace) was present with banners, declarations, direct support. Particularly at the shipyard in Gdańsk, WiP from the first day of the strike on was the only group that could effectively organize printing and copying facilities for the strikers. Walesa is said to have written and signed strike communiques on the backside of WiP leaflets!! WiP also had its own press in the shipyard.

Jan Minkiewicz — Western representative of WiP



WiP activist inside Lenin Shipyard during May strike. (Photo by WiP.)

@ Cappella

Special number; printed at the shipyard.

Young citizen of this not too lousy country, contestor, artist, anarchist, idiot:

If by accident you are not drunk, stoned with pot or TV, or tired after fucking — **then take the following message**:

In the Gdańsk Shipyard and a few other factories there are strikes going on.

You shouldn't totally ignore this, because among the supporters are we — your beloved and always loyal, dedicated friends from WiP. A victory in this manifestation will also be our victory. The strikers demand the release of all political prisoners, including those who are imprisoned for C.O.— our mates, your predecessors. Help, if you don't want to sit one day for C.O.. . .

From the first day of the strike on, a support group exists at the St. Brygida Church. Register there. And should participation and activities in a group not be your favorite thing — then paint walls, yell in front of the shipyard, get the vibes, step-dance or play the harmonica — but do it with the **striking workers** in mind. Harrah, hey. Long liiiiveee, viva la anarchia, boom, boom, ____.

Your favorites and fans, participants of WiP in the Coast Cities
(Three Towns: Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot)
We wait for you (for so many years)
Free Printinghouse of the Gdańsk Shipyard

More than once it was wondered in what way participants of the Gdańsk chapter of Freedom and Peace would behave in a critical situation in Poland, as in August 1980. Today's reality, that of strikes in May, constitutes a test situation for participants of Gdańsk WiP. Without any former analysis or coordination they supported the strikes, either by participating in them or organizing help for the striking men.

Strikes were accompanied by an atmosphere of enthusiasm also on the side of Freedom and Peace, for it was commonly thought that it might be the beginning of a total change. Participants of WiP who joined the strike in the shipyard turned out to be even more radical than the striking workers. They wanted to get to the shipyard's printing equipment but the strike committee opposed that idea. Getting to the equipment would require the use of force (breaking into the room with the equipment) and that was a new problem for the followers of non-violence (WiP) — what are the limits of using and not using force. Finally a printing press was supplied from the outside, and Freedom and Peace together with the Federation of Fighting Youth organized the strike's publishing bureau.

Plenty of papers were published, among them *@ cappella* and a leaflet addressed to the ZOMO (militarized police force) appealing to their humanity, presenting them with Otto Schimek as someone who valued morality more than military orders. There was such an abundance of Freedom and Peace papers that Lech Walesa autographed them.

Some people from WiP stenciled likenesses of imprisoned conscientious objector Slawomir Dutkiewicz on walls in the shipyard. In the end, the shipyard was full of various paintings and inscriptions written with sprays. Help for the strike was organized in one of the churches; WiP participants collected food and money for the strikers and helped to carry the supplies over to the shipyard. Those who are students were active in organizing protests in the university.

— Krzysztof Galinski
Gdańsk WiP

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(Continued from page 1)
create concrete links with other people doing similar things. To put it another way, the Gatherings are educational, celebratory and organizational, and sometimes these functions need to be separated.

From all reports sometimes this worked out and sometimes it did not. But several new attempts to form networks did occur: a prisoner support network, an anti-racist network (which says it will both attempt to involve anarchists in anti-racist struggles and conduct education within the anarchist movement), and a disabled persons network, to take three examples.

At the anti-imperialist affinity group, a proposal was put forward to form an anti-authoritarian contingent at a blockade of the Pentagon called for October 17 by the Pledge of Resistance and CISPES. In slightly amended form, this was endorsed at a meeting of what is sometimes called the North American Anarchist Network and sometimes called the *MAYDAY!* Network in the park the next day. (See page 3.) The national liberation discussion group was one of the largest, but to be honest, I came late and wouldn't want to hazard a report.

Another very popular workshop was "Anarchist Strategies." We plan to have an article based on discussions that began in that workshop in a future issue of the *Torch/La Antorcha*. Lesbian and Gay issues were taken up in back-to-back affinity and discussion group workshops called "Queer Anarchists." The growing strength of the anarchist movement and milieu was to be seen in a far larger Lesbian and Gay presence in Toronto than at the anarchist gathering in Minneapolis last year.

An affinity group of ex-Leninists also met, showing the increasing ability of the anarchist movement to attract revolutionaries away from Marxism-Leninism. Several people in it had left either the Revolutionary Communist Party or the RCP-associated No Business As Usual organization. Others had been in Trotskyist groups such as the International Socialist Organization. Two supporters of the RSL attended as members of an ex-Leninist organization. (Some members of the RSL call themselves anarchists while others call themselves libertarian socialists. We don't have plans to worry about it one way or another.)

On Sunday morning in the park, the North American Anarchist or *MAYDAY!* Network met. As mentioned before, the Network approved a plan for joint action in building a contingent on October 17. Preceding that, however, there was a meeting that discussed an interim organizational structure proposed the the Revolutionary Anarchist Bowling League (RABL). After a lengthy discussion, the proposal, which was not at all well circulated in written form, was neither approved nor rejected. It will appear in the next issue of *MAYDAY!*, followed by written comments in the issue of *MAYDAY!* after that. It will be taken up again either at the next Gathering or at an interim meeting of the Network. A decision on the next Gathering was also made on Sunday. It will be in San Francisco in either July or August of 1989. Further plans will be made at a meeting this October.

Sunday in the park also saw a lot of semi-formal get-togethers under various trees about various subjects. In any case, a report like this ends up necessarily distorting the reality of something like the Gathering, because the formal and structured part summarize easier than the informal parts: the late night talks, the late night sex, the meals taken together, the walks taken together. But all are a vital part of the continuing growth of commonality and unity among anarchists in North America.

Monday was the Day of Action. This was originally planned as a series of protests at various sites around Toronto symbolic of different aspects of the system we seek to overthrow. After news of the U.S. missile attack on an Iranian civilian airliner became known, the Day of Action planning and discussion meeting set a new time and place for our protest: noon at the U.S. Consulate on University Avenue.

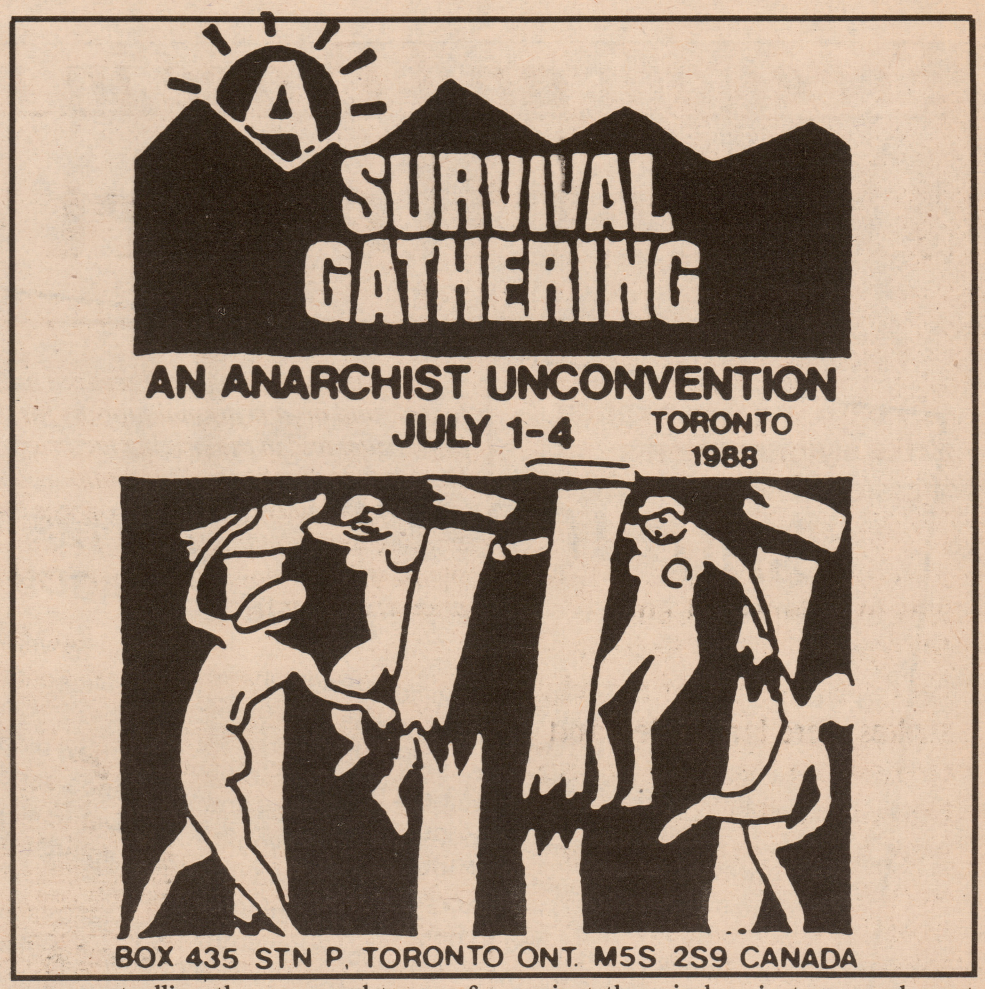
About 300 people took part in the protest. We slowly marched south, passing the Consulate, chanting and banging on stuff, while, hidden from the cops in the street by the crowd on the sidewalk, a couple of people worked on bending apart the vertical bars of the iron fence of the Consulate grounds. They made good progress before we were out of the area, but not quite enough to create a person-sized opening.

Police presence at this time was quite light and, judging from their reactions, they did not realize what was going on at the fence. So there was no real barrier to doing something like turning around 180°, marching back toward the Consulate and giving the bar benders another three minutes.

But there had been no discussion about the organization of the protest so there was no way for us to move as a group by our own decision. In fact, from that point on the movements and actions of the protest were largely a product of interactions between cops and various individuals and groups in the demonstration, not a result of cooperation, self-organization, or collective decision-making among the marchers.

Mounted police nudged us across half the street to a center island dominated by a war memorial to Canadian soldiers who died fighting for the British Empire in the Boer War in South Africa. A couple of people climbed the statue and burned the U.S. and the Canadian flags, then, declaring, "we don't need any symbols," burned the black (anarchist) flag as well. Contrary to press reports, we did not trample the island's petunia beds.

We were then nudged across the remaining half of the street, and were marching north now. The police moved to cut off the front of the march and force us to turn right, off University, and go east on one of the major cross streets, Dundas. When the cops at the front got a less than polite response to their move, all the mounted police who had been guarding the street galloped up to the front, leaving at least one-half to two-thirds of the march with open territory between them and the Consulate. There were attempts by a few individuals to encourage the taking of the street and an about-face and dash across the street to the Consulate, but the budding police-anarchist conflict at the front of the march captured most people's attention and it was impossible to stop the flow forward. Once again, an opportunity was lost that, with organization derived from prior discussion, could have been utilized. The police, not ourselves, were controlling the pace and tenor of our demonstration, even as we reacted militantly against them.



On Dundas Street, the first of what was to be 31 arrests occurred. The cops were completely freaked out by the free-flowing, aggressive style of protest and the lack of an agreed-upon route. The first person arrested was a Black man from the States, and dozens of people surged forward at the police line as they saw several cops beat him with nightsticks. Changing directions now, the demonstration began snaking through the downtown area, which has a big pedestrian square in its center. Several times mounted cops charged. Sometimes it seemed they were looking for specific people. Sometimes they were responding to taunts and chants. Sometimes they were reacting to such dangerous disorder as redirecting water sprinklers. Sometimes you just can't figure it. Sometimes when an arrest was made, there was an attempt to effect an unarrest. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't and resulted in more arrests. At one point a cop threw one of us against a glass window. But the cop got thrown against the window in turn, and went through it. In addition to attacking protestors, police attacked anyone who was taking pictures, including several photographers from the mainstream press.

After some regroupment, the protest went north out of the downtown area. After one more clash with the police the protest ended in Queen's Park. Some people went off to hold a picket line at the Japanese Consulate on behalf of Katsuhisa Omori, an anarchist prisoner on death row in Japan.

I won't attempt to review the legal situation of those arrested; besides, anything I write will quickly turn out of date. All were out of jail by the end of the week. A collection of clippings and information about the demonstration and the arrests is being assembled by one of those arrested and will be available soon.

Overall, the 1988 Unconvention showed both the growth of the anarchist movement in North America and the small but steady steps we are taking toward greater unity and effectiveness. See you at the Pentagon! See you in San Francisco! □

A localized struggle against state power.

SHUT IT DOWN!

JOIN THE ANARCHIST CONTINGENT AT THE PENTAGON BLOCKADE, OCT. 17, 1988

As the U.S. war on El Salvador drags on, so does the movement to stop it. Merry-go-round pickets that wear grooves into the pavement and "peacekeepers" at demos who try to restrain our resistance have failed to stop the war.

But recently the movement has been infused with new blood. A week last March, the government sent more troops to Honduras and thousands of new people—with new anger—hit the streets in response. A lot of us were youth who never used to go to demonstrations.

Suddenly our eyes are open. We are a new force against the war. We see ourselves as the people who are going to help turn this thing around.

In El Salvador, the U.S. supports government-by-death squad and the bombing of villages to suppress a revolution. The war there is only one aspect of a global war by the superpowers against the majority of humanity. As bureaucrats in the Pentagon and the Kremlin plan their next war moves, they are protecting a system that is destroying the planet ecologically. A system built on racism, sexism and homophobia.

This system rips off practically everyone on the planet, including a lot of us. Many of us may live comfortable lives because of how capitalism exploits other people, but that doesn't mean we feel any loyalty to it. Our "privilege" means growing up in a society that showers us with boom boxes, cars, and sitcoms, but that straitjackets our imagination and love for each other.

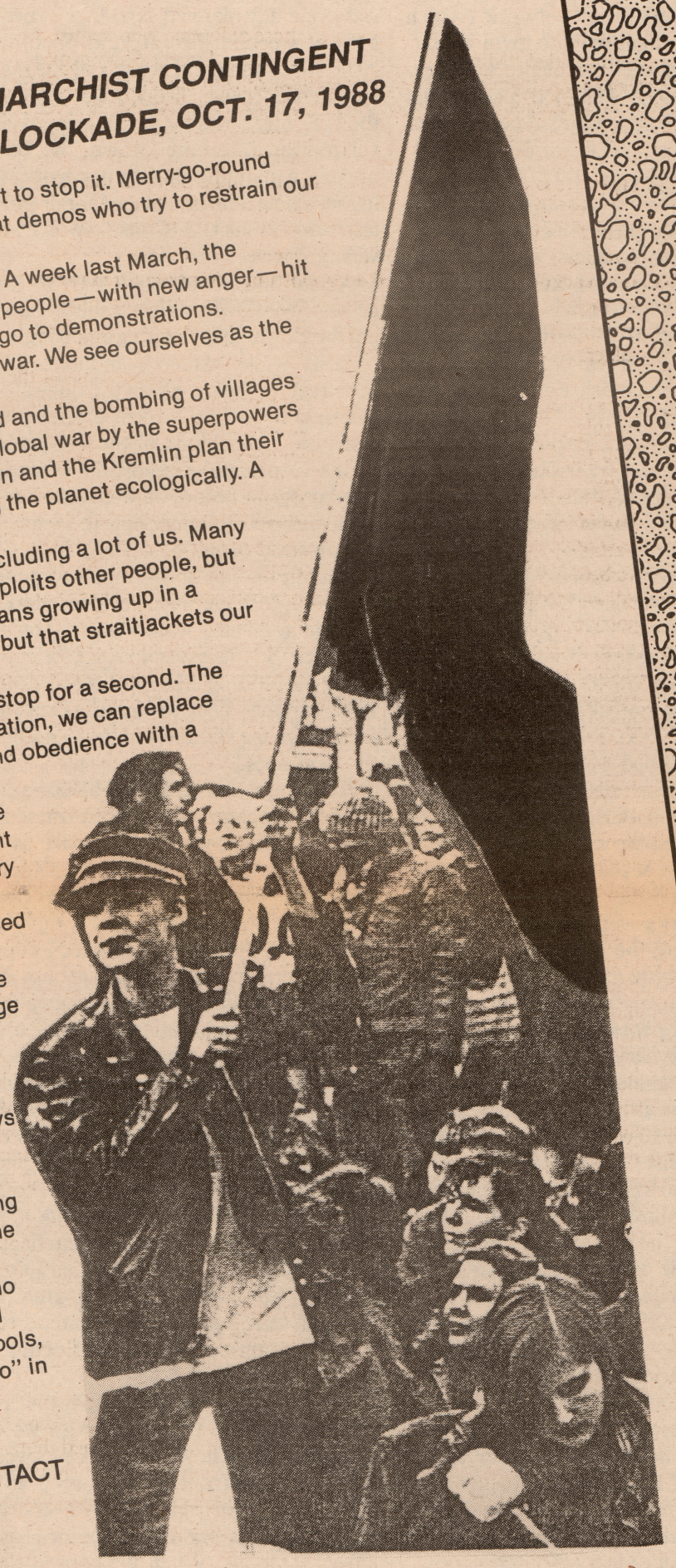
The situation is urgent. The pollution and murder never stop for a second. The missiles could be falling as you read this. But with determination, we can replace the wreckage and the authoritarian pattern of domination and obedience with a society built from the bottom up on cooperation.

The Pentagon represents what stands in the way of the kind of society worth living in. It represents the armed might of the handful of rich, white, men who profit from the misery of the world. Whether it's Apartheid, the war in Central America, or plans to fight and win a nuclear war, this 5-faced building houses the Empire's strategists.

A broad coalition of groups has called for a blockade of the Pentagon on Monday, October 17 to express outrage at the continued U.S. war against El Salvador.

Why go all the way to Washington for another demo? The Pentagon is War Central. A blockade there hounds the warmakers in their den. A blockade that says Shut It Down—and means it—tests our newfound strength and lets us learn to work together.

How can we make a change? By building a fighting movement that puts it on the line day to day. Every time one of us says "No" to U.S. imperialism, she or he speaks in the same voice as people in El Salvador who are already fighting back. We can become a powerful movement. We can challenge oppression in our schools, our workplaces, even our families, just by saying "No" in that same voice. That voice belongs to all of us.



MAYDAY Network of Anarchists
FOR MORE INFORMATION LOCAL CONTACT
2 EAST 27TH ST,
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55408 -or-
612-870-7008

On October 17, a coalition initiated by the Pledge of Resistance and the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador is organizing a Blockade of the Pentagon. Meeting as part of the anarchist Survival Gathering, the *MAYDAY!* Network of Anarchists endorsed an effort to build this action by creating an anarchist contingent (see pages 1 & 4 for more on the Gathering). Above is a call for that contingent, in a form that can be clipped out, taken to a copy shop and reproduced. Just add a local address! To get your local group involved in the overall planning, write to the Minneapolis address listed on the call leaflet. In the New York City area, you can write to Anarchist Pentagon Contingent, c/o NENW, 339 Lafayette St., room 202, New York, NY 10012.

LETTERS

WRITE TO: GPO BOX 1288, NEW YORK, NY 10116, USA

Homophobia, Racism and the Image of Harold Washington

Dear Torch/La Antorcha,

On May 11, a painting titled "Mirth and Girth," depicting the late Mayor Harold Washington in ladies' underwear, was removed from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago by a group of indignant aldermen and taken into custody by the Chicago police. At some point along the line, someone kicked a gaping hole in the canvas. This outrageous act of censor ship was justified as a reaction to the painting's allegedly "racist" character. A closer look at this event reveals the issue to be homophobic aldermen, not racist artists.

We reject the efforts of politicians and the media to portray this incident as a conflict between "anti-racists" and the artist's First Amendment rights. The unstated assumption here is that the painting, by calling the late mayor's sexuality into question, is an attack on his character and memory. We believe the following: 1) that "racism" was a smokescreen for the anti-gay bigotry motivating the seizure of the painting; 2) that certain Black aldermen, seeking to preserve—and exploit—the Washington legacy, are intent on suppressing any questions concerning his sexuality; 3) that their concern relative to the issue of Washington's sexuality falsely projects their homophobic attitudes onto the Black community-at-large; and, 4) that their injurious, demagogic posturing tends to undermine and debase the legitimacy of anti-racist struggles everywhere.

We have no idea whether the artist, David Nelson, is a racist; there is nothing inherently racist about painting a Black man in women's underwear. Nelson does appear to be an insensitive, self-promoting jerk. (It was Nelson who anonymously alerted Black aldermen.)

Why "Mirth and Girth"? Nelson says he painted the picture because the late mayor has begun to assume the stature of a "deity." In separate comments, a school official acknowledged that irreverence was a common theme in Nelson's work. Why did he tip off the politicians? One imagines that Nelson probably viewed the spectacle which ensued with some satisfaction—a living statement.

Why the impassioned reaction to "Mirth and Girth"?

1) The raid gave certain Black aldermen a chance to prove their loyalty to the memory of Harold Washington before the Black electorate. Black voters have not forgotten those aldermen who helped install Acting-Mayor Eugene Sawyer over Timothy Evans, the consensus choice of the Black-led Washington bloc. Sawyer, a Black, was the choice of white aldermen loyal to the racist Cook County Democratic Party machine. Some in the party which raided the Art Institute joined with the old guard to defeat Evans; for these Black aldermen "Mirth and Girth" created an opportunity to present themselves as militant defenders of the Washington dream and the fight for Black empowerment.

At the same time, however, some of the late mayor's closest allies also participated in the raid; they, no less than the "sell-outs," strenously object to any portrayal which does not fit with their memory of the late, straight Harold Washington.

2) Aldermen on both sides may have felt pressure to appear "militant" with the firing of Black mayoral aide Steve Cokely the previous week, following disclosures of his anti-Semitic activity. Ald. Bobby Rush, a one-time Black Panther, very clearly linked the issues in reacting to charges of censorship, "Steve Cokely was. . . fired and no outcry of First Amendment rights prevailed at that time. Now, because the subject of the portrait is Black, there's a hue and cry for First Amendment rights. There is a dual standard here." What he ignores is this: Cokely was preaching his belief that Jewish doctors are injecting Black babies with the AIDS virus; Nelson was merely playing with the issue of Mayor Washington's sexuality. Bobby Rush, it appears, believes these are comparable evils! If accusing someone of cross-dressing is equivalent to accusing someone of genocide, then it must follow that cross-dressing is as "evil" an action as genocide.

Beyond perpetuating the widely-held view that cross-dressing is somehow "wrong," the actions of the aldermen hinder, rather than help, the struggle against racism. While the media highlights their empty posturing, the genocidal oppression of the Black underclass—in which they are complicit—goes unchallenged. Want to fight racism? How about the Robert Taylor Homes or Cabrini-Green? How about ghetto schools and racist cops?

3) Projecting their own homophobia onto the Black community-at-large, certain Black aldermen appear worried that any revelations concerning the late mayor's sexuality could adversely affect their political fortunes. (Again, members of both factions are trying to wrap themselves in the mantle of the Washington legacy; the Sawyerites to quell reverberations of their "betrayal," the reformers to maintain a strong base of support for their initiatives and against the racists.)

In fact, it has long been widely rumored that Harold Washington was gay. These rumors were just as prevalent in the Black community as they were elsewhere. This did nothing to stop the Black electorate from mobilizing in record numbers in 1983 and again in 1987 in support of Harold Washington. Nonetheless, Ald. Alan Streeter goes to great lengths to "assure" us that the rumors are false, that Washington was not gay.

We don't know whether Harold Washington was gay, and, very frankly, we don't care. We do, however, resent the implication that gay sexuality is not acceptable! We must not allow these slights to go unchecked! As with any form of race or gender oppression, homophobia dehumanizes the victim. We will not be less than human; nor will we bury ourselves to win the approval of the oppressor!

Darrell Gordon
Guy Loudon
Chicago

comment

While I think many of the specific things Darrell and Guy are saying are true, I think they are missing the forest for the trees. The specifics of all the hypocrisy and maneuverings and the homophobic source of the reactions are all there and all correct. But they're not seeing the forest: the overall context of homophobia and racist polarization of U.S. society and Chicago. I believe that the painting of Washington in drag was intended as an insult. That it is both homophobic and racist. And that it matters what the artist intended; it matters what context the painting exists in.

U.S. society is homophobic. Most white people and most Black people are homophobic. In general shouting "queer," "faggot," etc., at a person is intended as an insult. And it's right to fight back at such insults—by challenging both the intent and the assumption behind the words. "So what if I am, what are you going to do about it?" The painting was just such an anti-gay shout. That's why Nelson, who Darrell and Guy call an insensitive, self-promoting jerk, tipped off the Black aldermen as to the existence of the painting. If there is no homophobic content to the painting, there is no content at all—it becomes, so to speak, a picture of Harold Washington drinking a glass of water. "Mirth and Girth" is not an innocent, harmless picture being taken all wrong by opportunist-and-especially-homophobic aldermen.

The society is also racist. When white people sneer at Jesse Jackson for wearing expensive suits, riding around in fancy cars, and walking into a room like he owns it, that's not working class pride and anti-authoritarianism we're hearing, it's racism. It's right to defend Jackson from such attacks; it's right to defend HUD Secretary Pierce from such attacks! Now Chicago is one of the most racially polarized cities in the country. For decades a white racist Democratic Machine ran the town. Harold Washington's victory changed the atmosphere in the city, although it didn't change much else. I believe "Mirth and Girth" was intended as an attack on that new atmosphere, on what has become the symbol of that new atmosphere and an attack that used the easiest, most available and cheapest handle this society provides.

Take this example: a car of white youth drive by and yell "Go Back to Africa" to Black youth standing on the sidewalk. The Black youth throw bricks at the car and beat the shit out of the whites. Is anyone confused? Even though there is every reason for Black people in the U.S. to be proud of their African heritage, every reason for Black people to want to visit their ancestors' homeland and make direct contact with the mother-culture and even though Black people's right to self-determination, including repatriation, should be defended by every revolution-

(Continued on page 9)

A big smile

Dear Friends,

I have read through all of your May-June issue the *Torch* and the experience produced a big smile and a happy laugh—not so easy these days. I like your style and your openness to divergent opinions—and of course I'm pleased you printed my piece on the election. Curiously, I find myself agreeing more with Wayne Price's analysis than my own! In fact, it's been a while since I've found so many areas of agreement in any publication. So, in solidarity with you I am enclosing a check for $20.00.

I'll soon be sending you another piece, titled: "The Price and Peace and the Emerging World Economy." I realize, of course, that you're not obligated to print it simply because you did the previous piece. I only hope it's readable. Feedback is welcome.

Rosurthian

Mass for Mandela

Dear Torch/La Antorcha,

Bishop Emerson J. Moore celebrated a mass for jailed Black South African leader Nelson Mandela in honor of his 70th birthday, Monday, July 18, at the Catholic Church of the Holy Family in New York City.

Scarlett Ibrahim
New York City

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Gerbil tied to parachute, tossed out window

Yes folks, it's that time again. Every three months the small number of people who work at putting out this paper get exhausted and start writing unbearably silly headlines—and worse. So, we wait a month to gather our wits and strength. See you in September.

TORCH

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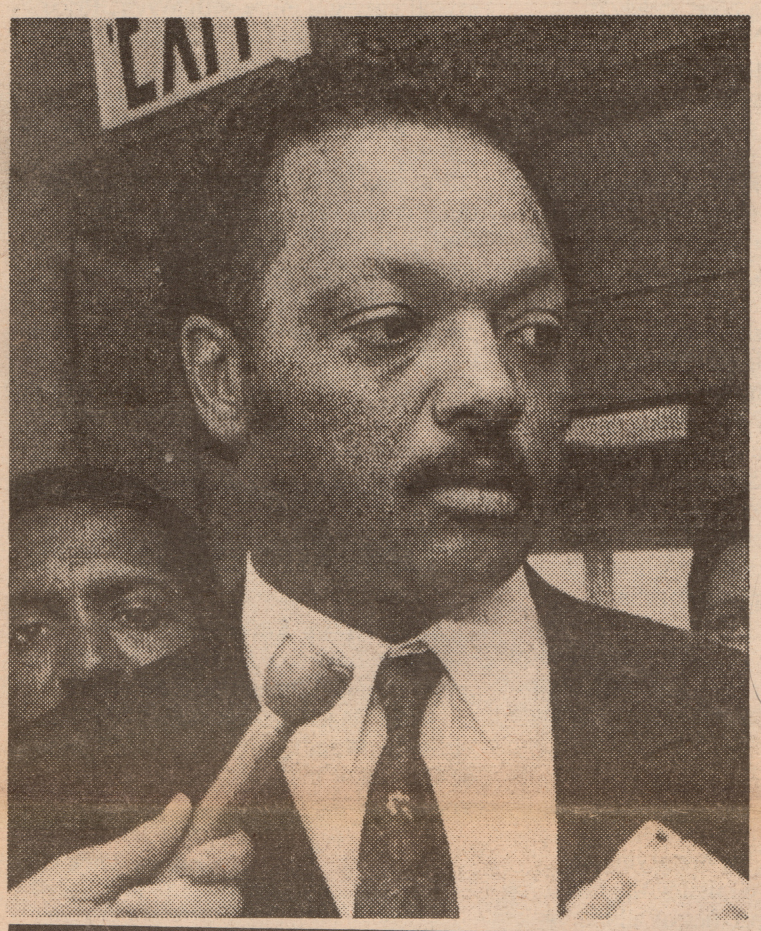
DP Unity—Who Gains?



By RON TABER

AS we go to press on the eve of the opening of the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis are working overtime to patch up their differences.

Up till a week ago, it seemed that an agreement between the two men and their respective advisers had been worked out. At meetings, in late June, of the Democratic Platform and Rules Committees, in Denver, Colorado, and Washington, D.C., respectively, the broad outlines of the deal were cut.

Jackson's platform proposals calling for a freeze on military spending, tax increases for the corporations and the rich, self-determination for the Palestinians and a pledge against first use of nuclear weapons had been voted down in exchange for agreeing to a plank that South Africa is to be labelled a "terrorist state," with a date set for all U.S. corporations to withdraw. Jackson would be allowed to raise a number of the defeated proposals for debate (and certain defeat), on the floor of the convention.

Meanwhile, the rules committee agreed to a Jackson proposal that the allocation of delegates at the *next* Democratic National Convention in 1992 more closely reflect the results of primary elections.

An additional part of the arrangement between Jackson and Dukakis was a general understanding that Jackson was at least to be considered for the vice-presidential nomination, regardless of who was actually nominated. Jackson could then claim that merely having a Black person considered for the vice-presidential slot represented a historic victory for Black people.

Since that time, the arrangement between the two men broke down. While it was pretty obvious that Dukakis was not really considering Jackson for the vice-presidential nomination, he not only didn't bother to make it look like he was consulting Jackson over who the nominee would be, *he didn't have the decency to inform Jackson personally who his choice was!* Jackson found out from a news reporter when he got off a plane in Washington.

Dukakis claims that this was an oversight, that he had tried to reach Jackson about his decision to choose Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen as his running mate late on the night he made his deci-

(Continued on page 9)

700 at 1988 Anarchist Gathering in Toronto

By WILLIAM FALK

ABOUT 700 ANARCHISTS, anti-authoritarians and libertarian socialists found their way to Toronto over the July 1–July 4 long weekend for the third continental anarchist gathering of the past three years. The Toronto anarchist community had clearly worked long and hard and the results were plain: a well organized gathering that made time and space for the many diverse flavors, sounds, images and textures of North American anarchism today.

Two days of the Gathering were largely devoted to workshops. About nine or ten workshops were held at a time, most scheduled in advance, some of them scheduled during the course of the Gathering. In all, there were seven time slots for workshops, for a total of about 70 (!), ranging in size from a half dozen to more than 50 people. For people who didn't go to a workshop, a small park (out back of one of the two buildings where events were held) served as a town square for the community-for-the-weekend created by the Gathering. Also at the same time as the workshops, videos about anarchism were shown and there was a collection of tables with literature, posters, buttons, etc.

Music from a variety of bands at two clubs Saturday night; networking meetings and a music/poetry/etc. concert in Alexandra Park on Sunday; and, on Monday, July 4, a Day of Action that became a demonstration at the U.S. Consulate against the U.S. destruction of an Iranian passenger airliner ("Anti-American Riots") rounded out the Gathering.

About two-thirds to three-quarters of the Gathering was made up of U.S. nationals, with most of the rest Canadians. I think a little over half the people were between 15 and 25 years old; a little under half were women. Only a small number of Black or Latino people and only a few French-speaking Canadians participated. About a dozen kids under 12 were there, and activities were organized for them during most of the daytime hours. There was petty police harassment of the Gathering: a couple of U.S. nationals were arrested on trumped up immigration charges and one Gathering organizer was ticketed for jaywalking, but the actions were not allowed to disrupt our activities.

The workshops were divided into different types: Discussion Groups, Presentations, Skills, Affinity Groups, Spontaneous, or Free Space. This was an attempt to lay some ground rules and create common expectations about the purpose and goals, if any, of the workshops, which many times were made up of people who didn't know each other. It was an attempt to deal with the fact that the Gatherings have emerged as both a place to learn about anarchism, meet other anarchists for the first time and begin an exchange of ideas and feelings, and a place where people who have been working locally on projects want to

(Continued on page 4)

Officials Fear Anarchists' Idea of a Good Time

Title of the guide book for the Anarchist Survival Gathering, the 1988 North American Anarchist Unconvention, borrowed from a Toronto Sun headline.